REMARKS

Claims 1 through 11 remain pending in the present application. Claim 1 has been amended. Basis for the amendments can be found throughout the specification, drawings and claims as originally filed.

DRAWINGS

Figure 11 illustrates an agricultural machine and a driven component of an agricultural implement. No new matter has been added.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103

The Examiner rejects Claims 1 through 4, 6 through 8, 10 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) alleging them to be unpatentable over U.S. patents to Walters et al in view of Aota et al. The Examiner alleges that this combination would render Applicants' invention obvious to those skilled in the art.

Claim 1 has been amended. Claim 1 defines the second shaft engaging the first shaft to enable torque transmission without relative rotational movement and it enables relative axial sliding motion therebetween. The joint component is both rotatable through a specified range of free motion rotation without torque transmission and is fixed from axial movement.

The art relied on by the Examiner, specifically Walters et al and Aota et al fail to disclose or suggest Applicants' invention. The Walters et al reference, cited by the Examiner, illustrates a swivel hitch. The invention is drawn to a swivel hitch with a structure which is easily adaptable for connection to either a

pair of draft links, a drawbar or a towing tractor. Nowhere does Walters et al remotely disclose or suggest the desirability of any type of free motion. The Examiner alleges that Walters et al in combination with Aota et al would provide such teaching. Clearly this is not the case.

The Aota et al reference cited by the Examiner, neither discloses nor suggests free motion. The Aota et al reference, especially in Figure 5, illustrates that torque transmission starts from zero between the two axis. One of the axes is concerned with torque transmission and the other with elastic twisting. Thus, there is no free rotation in the Aota et al device, since there is always a torque applied on the device.

Further, there is no suggestion to combine the Aota et al reference with the Walters et al reference. Walters et al has no need for a shaft joint like that of Aota et al. In fact, Aota et al is designed for a steering column of a vehicle and not for the connection between a tractor and an agricultural implement. Thus, one skilled in the art would not combine these two teachings as suggested by the Examiner. Only, through the use of hindsight, would the Examiner combine these two references to allegedly render Applicants' invention obvious. This hindsight is impermissible under §103.

Accordingly, Applicants believe Claim 1, as well as dependent Claims 2 through 11, to be patentably distinct over the art cited by the Examiner.

In light of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants would submit that all pending claims are in condition for allowance.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to pass the case to issue at his earliest possible convenience. Should the Examiner have any questions regarding the present application, he should not hesitate to contact the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: March 11, 2004

By: _____
W. R. Duke Taylor
Reg. No. 31,306

HARNESS, DICKEY & PIERCE, P.L.C.
P.O. Box 828
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48303
(248) 641-1600

WRDT/jp
Enclosure